DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 478 334 CE 085 122

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TITLE	Communities of Youth: Cultural Practice and Informal Learning.
ISBN	ISBN-0-7546-1976-1
PUB DATE	2002-00-00
NOTE	142p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Ashgate Publishing Company, Suite 420, 101 Cherry Street, Burlington, VT 05401-4405 ($64.95). Tel: 802-865-7641; Fax: 802-865-7847; e-mail: info@ashgate.com; Web site: http://www.ashgate.com/ .
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available From EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Art Education; Case Studies; Community Support; Cross Cultural Studies; Developed Nations; *Education Work Relationship; *Educational Environment; Educational Practices; Employment Potential; Empowerment; *Experiential Learning; Foreign Countries; Individual Development; *Informal Education; *Outcomes of Education; Relevance (Education); Skill Development; Transitional Programs; Youth Problems; *Youth Programs
IDENTIFIERS	Contextualized Instruction; England (Liverpool); *Europe; Identity Formation; Portugal (Lisbon); Youth Culture

ABSTRACT

The roles of cultural practice and informal learning in young people's transitions to work and adulthood were explored in case studies of performing arts programs in Mannheim, Germany; Liverpool, England; and Lisbon, Portugal. Expert interviews, participant observation, and documentary analysis were conducted to explore how the pedagogical model adopted by each program actually worked and what made each program attractive to participants and effective in easing young people's transition from school to work. All three programs offered an educational setting where learning is likely to be closely related to several aspects of identity work. First, the courses provided young people with a secure biographical space where they could develop self-confidence and self-consciousness. Second, the projects managed to bridge the gap between social and symbolic aspects of youth lifestyles and the perception of youth prevailing in education and training institutions. Third, the projects featured a set of properties that are essential to successfully stipulate informal learning. Those properties included reciprocal relationships between trainers and participants, openness to experiential activities, and a combination of activities performed for their own sake with activities aiming at future goals. The case studies documented the enormous potential of informal learning in helping youth develop the generic skills needed for their adult lives and work. (Contains 134 references.) (MN)

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